
*At a GENERAL COURT held at Boston in New-England,
the 15th. of October 1679.*

THis Court having perused the Result of the late Synod of *Sept. 10. 1679.* doe judge it meet to commend the same to the serious Consideration of all the Churches and People in this Jurisdiction; hereby injoyning and requiring all Persons in their respective capacities, to a carefull and diligent Reformation of all those provoking evils mentioned therein, according to the true intent thereof, that so the anger and displeasure of God, which hath been many wayes manifested, may be averted from this poor People, and his favour and blessing obtained as in former times; and for this end hath ordered the same to be Printed.

By the Court, Edward Rawson Secr.

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REFORMATION

With the Expedients subservient
thereunto, asserted;

in Answer to two

QUESTIONS

- I. *What are the Evils that have provoked the Lord to bring his Judgments on New-England?*
- II. *What is to be done that so those Evils may be Reformed?*

Agreed upon by the
ELDERS and MESSENGERS
of the Churches assembled in the

SYNOD

At Boston in New-England,

Sept. 10. 1679.

J. Mathews

Mal. 3. 7. Even from the dayes of your Fathers yee are gone away from mine Ordinances, and have not kept them; Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts: but ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Rev. 2. 4, 5. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and Repent, and doe the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy Candlestick out of his place, except thou Repent.

B O S T O N;
Printed by *John Foster.* In the Year, 1679.

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TO THE MUCH HONOURED

General Court

Of the *Massachusetts Colony* now sitting at *Boston*
in *NEW-ENGLAND*

Right Worshipful, Worshipful, and much honoured in our Lord Jesus !

THE Wayes of God towards this his People, have in many respects been like unto his dealings with Israel of old : It was a great and high undertaking of our Fathers, when they ventured themselves and their little ones upon the rude waves of the vast Ocean, that to they might follow the Lord into this Land; a parallel instance not to be given, except that of our Father Abraham from Vr of the Chaldees, or that of his Seed from the land of Egypt; the Lord alone did lead them and there was no strange God with them. In the wilderness have we dwelt in safety alone, being made the Subjects of most peculiar mercies and privileges. The good will of him that dwelt in the bush hath been upon the head of those that were separated from their Brethren : and the Lord hath (by turning a Wilderness into a fruitful land) brought us into a wealthy place; he hath planted a Vine, having cast out the Heathen, prepared Room for it, and caused it to take deep rooting, and to fill the land, which hath sent out its boughs unto the Sea, and its branches to the River. If we ask of the dayes that are past, and look from the one side of heaven to the other, where can we find the like to this great thing which the Lord hath done ? His planting these heavens, and laying the foundations of this earth, is (if any thing be) to be reckoned amongst the wonderful works of God which this age hath seen. If we look abroad over the face of the whole earth, where shall we see a place or people brought to such perfection and considerableness, in so short a time ? Our adversaries themselves being judges, it hath not been so with any of the outgoings of the Nations. We must then ascribe all these things, as unto the grace and abundant goodness of the Lord our God, so to his owning a religious design and interest; such was *New-Englands* in its primitive constitution. Our Fathers neither sought for, nor thought of great things for themselves, but did seek first the Kingdome of God, and his righteousness, and all these things were added to them. They came not into the wilderness to see a man clothed in soft raiment. But that we have in too many respects, been forgetting the Errand upon which the Lord sent us hither, all the world is witness:

And

And therefore we may not wonder that God hath changed the tenour of his Dispensations towards us, turning to doe us hurt, and consuming us after that he hath done us good. If we had continued to be as once we were, the Lord would have continued to doe for us, as once he did. This notwithstanding, we must not deny or disown what of God is remaining amongst us. There is cause to fear that the same evils for which the Lord is contending with us, are to be found in other Reformed Churches, and perhaps in a higher degree, then as yet with us; considering that these Churches doe still (through the grace of Christ) own both the faith and order of the Gospel, that was professed in the dayes of our Fathers: and there are a number of precious soules (a few names that have not defiled their garments with the sins of the times) we hope in every Congregation: only the present Generation in New-England, as to the body of it, in respect of the practice and power of Godliness, is far short of those whom God saw meet to improve in laying the foundation of his Temple here: and our iniquities admit of sadder aggravations then can be said of others, because we sin against greater light, and means, and mercies then ever People (all circumstances considered) have done; and therefore the Lord is righteous in all the evil that hath befallen us. And it is high time for us to be earnest, as to an impartial *Scrutiny* concerning the causes of his holy displeasure against us, together with the proper Remedyes or Scripture expedients, for Reformation, that so the Lord, who hath said, Return unto me, and I will return unto you, may be at peace with us. Effaves respecting this matter have not been altogether wanting, but hitherto successles in a great degree. Wherefore, it hath pleased God so to dispose, as that your selves, who are the Honoured General Court of this Colony, have called upon all the Churches therein, to send their Elders and Messengers, that they might meet in form of a Synod, in order to a most serious enquiry, into the questions here propounded and answered. We cannot but hope this motion was of God, since (after the Prayers of his People have been solemnly and abundantly poured out before him that it might be so) evident Tokens of the Lords gracious Presence in and with that Reverend Assembly, have been taken notice of; especially in that he was pleased so to enlighten the minds, and encline the hearts of his Servants, (the Messengers and Representatives of the Churches) as that there was an unanimity in their Votes and Determinations, and that not only with reference to the Answers unto those Questions, but other things then discussed and concluded on. There was at first some agitation about the matter of a *Regular Synod*, by reason that some of the Churches (notwithstanding their Elders desiring them to send other Messengers also) sent their Elders alone. That which is expressed in the Platform of Discipline, concerning this particular, was assented unto, *viz.* that not only Elders, but other Messengers ought to be delegated by the Churches, and so to have their Suffrages in such Assemblies. A Principle which doth agree with the Primitive Pattern, Act. 15. 23. And with the practice of the Churches in the ages next following the Apostles, as is evident from the writings of *Cyprian*, and others of the Ancients. And the interest of the People in such Conventions is strongly asserted and evinced by our *Fuel*, *Whitaker*, *Parker*, and others against Papists and Prelates, who maintain that *Laicks* (as they call them) are not fit matter for a Synod. This Debate being issued, it was put to Vote, whether the Assembly did approve of *The Platform of Church Discipline*; & both Elders & Brethren did unanimously lift up their hands in the affirmative, not one appearing when

The Epistle Dedicatory.

when the Vote was propounded in the Negative, but it joyntly passed in these words,

“ A Synod of the Churches in the Colony of the Massachusetts, being called by the honoured General Court to convene at Boston, the 10. of Sept. 1679. having read and considered the Platform of Church Discipline, agreed upon by the Synod assembled at Cambridge, Anno 1648. doe unanimously approve of the said Platform, for the substance of it, desiring that the Churches may continue stedfast in the order of the Gospel, according to what is therein declared from the Word of God.

Now blessed be the God of our Fathers, that hath enclined our hearts to own that Cause and those Truths, which they did with so much industry and faithfulness gather from the Scriptures, and on the account whereof they were sometimes *Confessors*, and Sufferers, being *Exiles* in this Wilderness, where the Lord was pleased to shew them the Pattern of his House, and all the forms thereof; and we know not what Temptations (for there is an hour of Temptation coming upon all the world) we may yet meet with; wherefore, the obtaining of the Vote mentioned (had there been nothing else done) was well worth our coming together. But besides that, several dayes were spent, in discoursing upon the Questions herewith presented; when every Member of the *Synod* had full liberty to express himself: after which, some were chosen, to draw up what did appear to be the mind of the Assembly, and the mind of Christ, in whose name we came together, and considered of this matter. The Return made by those who had been appointed unto that Service, was read once and again, each Paragraph being duly and distinctly weighed in the ballance of the Sanctuary, and then, upon mature deliberation, the whole unanimously voted, as to the substance, end, and scope thereof. The things here insisted on, have (at least many of them) been oftentimes mentioned and inculcated by those whom the Lord hath set as Watchmen to the house of Israel, though alas! not with that success which their Souls have desired. It is not a small matter, nor ought it to seem little in our eyes, that the Churches have in this way confessed and declared the Truth, which coming from a *Synod* as their joint concurring Testimony, will carry more Authority with it, then if one man only, or many in their single capacities, should speak the same things. And undoubtedly, the issue of this undertaking will be most signal, either as to mercy, or misery. If New-England remember whence she is fallen, and doe the first works, there is reason to hope that it shall be better with us then at our beginnings. But if this, after all other means in and by which the Lord hath been striving to reclaim us, shall be despised, or become ineffectual, we may dread what is like to follow. It is a solemn thought, that the Jewish Church had (as the Churches in New-England have this day) an opportunity to Reform (if they would) in Josiah's time, but because they had no heart unto it, the Lord quickly removed them out of his sight. What God out of his Sovereignty may doe for us, no man can say, but according to his wonted dispensations, we are a perishing People, if now we *Reform* not.

Now the Lord help you his Servants, under whose influence, and by whose encouragement, this Synod hath convened, to promote this matter, both by your Recommendation of these Conclusions unto the Churches, for their consideration and acceptance in the Lord, and otherwise according to your respective Relations and Capacities: and the Lord strengthen your hearts and hands therein; for much doth depend upon your Courage, Prudence, Zeal and Activity. We doe

not

The Epistle Dedicatory,

not read in the Scripture, nor in History, of any notable general Reformation amongst a People, except the Magistrate did help forward the work. Haggai's and Zachary's Sermons, would never have built the Temple, if Zerubbabel ~~and~~ *ye* Shealtiel (godly Magistrates) had not improved their authority for that end. *Luther, Calvin, Zuinglius*, and other Reformers, would have laboured in vain, had not the Princes and Senators amongst whom they lived, promoted the interest of Reformation. Nor was it ever known, that the civil Authority in any place, did their utmost towards the suppression of growing Evils, but there was (at least ~~while~~ for the present) some good effect thereof. These things are therefore commended to your most serious Consideration; It is (under God) by you that we enjoy great quietness. The good Lord continue the present Government, and Governours, under whose shadow (as sometimes the Remnant of Judah under Gedaliah) we have sat with great delight; and grant that every one (both Leaders and People) in their proper place and order, may up and be doing, and that the Lord our God may be with us, as he was with our Fathers.

Now be strong, O Zerubbabel, be strong, O Joshuah, and be strong all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you; according to the word that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt; so my Spirit remaineth amongst you; Fear ye not.

Quest.



QUEST. I.

VV Hat are the Evils that have provoked the Lord to bring his Judgements on New-England?

Ans. That sometimes God hath had, and pleaded a Controversy with his People, is clear from the Scripture, Hof. 4. 1. and 12. 2. Mic 6. 1, 2, Where God doth plainly and fully propose, state and plead his Controversy, in all the parts and Causes of it, wherein he doth justify himself, by the Declaration of his own infinite Mercy, Grace, Goodness, Justice, Righteousness, Truth and Faithfulness, in all his proceedings with them; And judge his People, charging them with all those provoking Evils which had been the causes of that Controversy, and that with the most high, and heavy aggravation of their Sins, and exaggeration of the guilt and punishment, whence he should have been most just in pleading out his Controversy with them, unto the utmost extremity of Justice and Judgement.

That God hath a Controversy with his New-England People is undeniable, the Lord having written his displeasure in dismal Characters against us. Though Personal Afflictions doe oftentimes come only or chiefly for Probation, yet as to publick Judgements it is not wont to be so; especially when by a continued Series of Providence, the Lord doth appear and plead against his People. 2 Sam. 21. 1. As with us it hath been from year to year. Would the Lord have whetted his glittering Sword, and his hand have taken hold on Judgement? Would he have sent such a mortal Contagion like a Beefom of Destruction in the midst of us? Would he have said, Sword! goe through the Land, and cut off man and Beast?

Or would he have kindled such devouring Fires, and made such fearfull Desolations in the Earth, if he had not been angry? It is not for nothing that the merciful God, who doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the Children of men, hath done all these things unto us; yea and sometimes with a Cloud hath covered himself, that our Prayer should not pass through. And although tis possible that the Lord may Contend with us partly on the account of secret unobserved Sins, Josh. 7. 11, 12. 2 King. 17. 9. Psal. 90. 8. In which respect, a deep and most serious enquiry into the Causes of his Controversy ought to be attended. Nevertheless, it is sadly evident that there are visible, manifest Evils, which without doubt the Lord is provoked by. For,

I. There is a great and visible decay of the power of Godliness amongst many Professors in these Churches. It may be feared, that there is in too many spiritual and heart Apostacy from God, whence Communion with him in the wayes of his Worship, especially in Secret, is much neglected, and whereby men cease to know and fear, and love and trust in him; but take up their contentment and satisfaction in something else. This was the ground and bottom of the Lords Controversy with his People of old. Psal. 78. 8, 37. & 81. 11. Jer. 2. 5, 11, 13. And with his People under the New Testament also. Rev. 2. 4, 5.

II. The Pride that doth abound in New-England testifies against us. Hos. 5. 5. Ezek. 7. 10. Both spiritual Pride, Zeph. 3. 11. Whence two great Evils and Provocations have proceeded and prevailed amongst us.

1. A refusing to subject to Order according to divine appointment, Num. 16. 3. 1 Pet. 5. 5.

2. Contention. Prov. 13. 10. An evil that is most eminently against the solemn Charge of the Lord Jesus, Joh. 13. 34, 35. And that for which God hath by severe Judgements punished his People, both in former and latter Ages. This Malady hath been very general in the Country: we have therefore cause to fear that the Wolves which God in his holy Providence hath let loose upon us, have been sent to chastise his Sheep for their dividings and straying one from another; and that the Warrs and Fightings, which have proceeded from the Lust of Pride in special, have been punished with the Sword, Jam. 4. 1. Job. 19. 29.

Yea, and Pride in respect of Apparel hath greatly abounded.

Scr.

Servants, and the poorer sort of People are notoriously guilty in this matter, who (too generally) goe above their estates and degrees, thereby transgressing the Laws both of God and man, Math. 11.8. Yea, it is a Sin that even the light of nature, and Laws of civil Nations have condemned. 1 Cor. 1. 14. Also, many, not of the meaner sort, have offended God by strange Apparel, not becoming serious Christians, especially in these dayes of affliction and misery, wherein the Lord calls upon men to put off their Ornaments, Exod. 33. 5. Jer. 4. 30. A Sin which brings Wrath upon the greatest that shall be found guilty of it, Zeph. 1. 8. with Jer. 52. 13. Particularly, the Lord hath threatned to visit with Sword and Sickness, and with loathsome diseases for this very Sin. Isa. 3. 16.

III. Inasmuch as it was in a more peculiar manner with respect to the second Commandment, that our Fathers did follow the Lord into this wilderness, whilst it was a land not sown, we may fear that the breaches of that Commandment are some part of the Lords Controversy with New-England. Church Fellowship, and other divine Institutions are greatly neglected. Many of the Rising Generation are not mindfull of that which their Baptism doth engage them unto, viz. to use utmost endeavours that they may be fit for, and so partake in, all the holy Ordinances of the Lord Jesus Mat. 28. 20. There are too many that with profane Esau slight spiritual priviledges. Nor is there so much of Discipline, extended towards the Children of the Covenant, as we are generally agreed ought to be done. On the other hand, humane Inventions, and Will-worship have been set up even in Jerusalem. Men have set up their Thresholds by Gods Threshold, and their Posts by his Post. Quakers are false Worshipers: and such Anabaptists as have risen up amongst us, in opposition to the Churches of the Lord Jesus, receiving into their Society those that have been for scandal delivered unto Satan, yea, and improving those as Administrators of holy Things, who have been (as doth appear) *justly* under Church Censures, do no better then set up an Altar against the Lords Altar. Wherefore it must needs be provoking to God, if these things be not duly and fully testified against, by every one in their several Capacities respectively. Josh. 22. 19. 2 King. 23. 13. Ezek. 43. 8. Psal. 99. 8. Hof. 11. 6.

IIII. The Holy and glorious Name of God hath been polluted and profaned amongst us, More especially,

1. By Oathes, and Imprecations in ordinary Discourse; Yea, and it is too common a thing for men in a more solemn way to Swear unnecessary Oaths; whenas it is a breach of the third Commandment, so to use the blessed Name of God. And many (if not the most) of those that swear, consider not the Rule of an Oath, Jer. 4. 2. So that we may justly fear that because of swearing the Land mourns, Jer. 23. 10.

2. There is great profaness, in respect of irreverent behaviour in the solemn Worship of God. It is a frequent thing for men (though not necessitated thereunto by any infirmity) to sit in prayer time, and some with their heads almost covered, and to give way to their own sloth and sleepiness, when they should be serving God with attention and intention, under the solemn dispensation of his Ordinances. We read but of one man in the Scripture that slept at a Sermon, and that sin had like to have cost him his life, Act. 20. 9.

V. There is much Sabbath-breaking; Since there are multitudes that do profanely absent themselves or theirs from the publick worship of God, on his Holy day, especially in the most populous places of the Land; and many under pretence of differing apprehensions about the beginning of the Sabbath, do not keep a seventh part of Time Holy unto the Lord, as the fourth Commandment requireth. Walking abroad, and Travelling. (not meely on the account of worshipping God in the solemn Assemblies of his people, or to attend works of necessity or mercy) being a common practice on the Sabbath day, which is contrary unto that Rest enjoined by the Commandment. Yea, some that attend their particular servile callings and employments after the Sabbath is begun, or before it is ended. Worldly, unsuitable discourses are very common upon the Lords day, contrary to the Scripture which requireth that men should not on Holy Times find their own pleasure, nor speak their own words, Isai 58. 13. Many that do not take care so to dispatch their worldly businesses, that they may be free & fit for the duties of the Sabbath, and that do (if not wholly neglect) after a careless, heartless manner perform the duties that concern the sanctification of the Sabbath. This brings wrath, Fires, and other Judgements upon a professing People, Neh 13. 17, 18. Jer. 17. 27.

VI. As what concerns Families and the Government thereof, there

there is much amiss. There are many Families that doe not pray to God constantly morning and evening, and many more wherein the Scriptures are not daily read, that so the word of Christ might dwell richly with them. Some (and too many) Houses that are full of Ignorance and Profaness, and these not duely inspected; for which cause Wrath may come upon others round about them, as well as upon themselves. Josh. 22. 20. Jer. 5. 7. & 10. 25. And many Householders who profess Religion, doe not cause all that are within their gates, to become subject unto good order as ought to be. Ex. 20. 10. Nay, children & Servants that are not kept in due subjection; their Masters, and Parents especially, being sinfully indulgent towards them. This is a sin which brings great Judgements, as we see in Eli's and David's Family. In this respect, Christians in this Land, have become too like unto the Indians, and then we need not wonder if the Lord hath afflicted us by them. Sometimes a Sin is discerned by the Instrument that Providence doth punish with. Most of the Evils that abound amongst us, proceed from defects as to Family Government.

VII. Inordinate Passions. Sinfull Heats and Hatreds, and that amongst Church Members themselves, who abound with evil Surmising, uncharitable and unrighteous Censures, Back-bitings, hearing and telling Tales, few that remember and duely observe the Rule, with an angry countenance to drive away the Tale-bearer: Reproachfull and reviling Expressions, sometimes to or of one another. Hence Law suits are frequent, Brother going to Law with Brother, and provoking and abusing one another in publick Courts of Judicature, to the Scandal of their holy Profession. Isa. 58. 4. 1 Cor 6. 6, 7. And in managing the Discipline of Christ, some (and too many) are acted by their Passions & Prejudices more then by a spirit of Love & Faithfulness towards their Brothers Soul, which things are, as against the Law of Christ, so dreadfull violations of the Church Covenant, made in the presence of God.

VIII. There is much Intemperance. That heathenish and Idolatrous practice of Health-drinking is too frequent. That shamefull iniquity of sinfull Drinking is become too general a Provocation. Dayes of Training, and other publick Solemnities, have been abused in this respect: And not only English but Indians have been debauched, by those that call themselves Christians, who have put their

bottles to them, and made them drunk also; This is a crying Sin, and the more aggravated in that the first Planters of this Colony did (as is in the Patent expressed) come into this Land with a design to Convert the Heathen unto Christ, but if instead of that, they be taught Wickedness, which before they were never guilty of, the Lord may well punish us by them. Moreover, the Sword, Sicknes, Poverty, and almost all the Judgements which have been upon New-England, are mentioned in the Scripture as the wofull fruit of *That Sin*. Isa. 5. 11, 12. & 28. 1, 2. & 36. 9, 12. Prov. 23. 21, 29, 30. & 21. 17. Hof. 7. 5. & 2. 8. 9. There are more Temptations and occasions unto *That Sin*, publickly allowed of, then any necessity doth require; the proper end of Taverns, &c. being for the entertainment of Strangers, which if they were improved to that end only, a far less number would suffice: But it is a common practice for Town-dwellers, yea and Church-members, to frequent publick Houses, and there to mispend precious Time, unto the dishonour of the Gospel, and the scandalizing of others, who are by such examples induced to sin against God. In which respect, for Church members to be unnecessarily in such Houses, is sinfull, scandalous, and provoking to God. 1 Cor. 8. 9. 10. Rom. 14. 21. Mith 17. 27. & 18. 7.

And there are other hainous breaches of the seventh Commandment. Temptations thereunto are become too common, viz. such as immodest Apparel, Prov. 7. 10. Laying out of hair, Borders, naked Necks and Arms, or, which is more abominable, naked Breasts, and mixed Dancings, light behaviour and expressions, sinful Company-keeping with light and vain persons, unlawfull Gaming, an abundance of Idleness, which brought ruining Judgement upon Sodom, and much more upon Jerusalem. Ezek. 16. 49. and doth sorely threaten New-England, unless effectual Remedyes be throughly and timouly applied.

IX. There is much want of Truth amongst men. Promise-breaking is a common sin, for which New-England doth hear ill abroad in the world. And the Lord hath threatned for that transgression to give his People into the hands of their Enemies, and that their dead bodies should be for meat unto the Fowls of heaven, and to the Beasts of the earth; which judgements have been verified upon us. Jer. 34. 18, 20. And false Reports have been too common, yea, walking with slanders and Reproaches, and that sometimes against the most faithfull and eminent Servants of God. The Lord is not

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wont to suffer such Iniquity to pass unpunished. Jer. 9.4,5. Numb. 16. 41.

X. Inordinate affection to the world. Idolatry is a God provoking, Judgement-procuring sin. And Coverousness is Idolatry. Eph. 5.5. There hath been in many professors an insatiable desire after Land, and worldly Accommodations, yea, so as to forsake Churches and Ordinances, and to live like Heathen, only that so they might have Elbow-room enough in the world. Farms and merchandising have been preferred before the things of God. In this respect, the Interest of New England seemeth to be changed. We differ from other out-goings of our Nation, in that it was not any worldly consideration that brought our Fathers into this wilderness, but Religion, even that so they might build a Sanctuary unto the Lords Name; Whenas now, Religion is made subservient unto worldly Interests. Such iniquity causeth War to be in the Gates, and Cities to be burnt up. Judg. 8.5. Math. 22. 5,7. Wherefore, we cannot but solemnly bear witness against that practice of settling Plantations without any Ministry amongst them, which is to prefer the world before the Gospel. When Lot did forsake the Land of Canaan, and the Church which was in Abrahams Family, that so he might have better worldly Accommodations in Sodom, God fired him out of all, and he was constrained to leave his goodly pastures, which his heart (though otherwise a good man) was too much set upon. Moreover, that many are under the prevailing power of the sin of worldliness is evident,

1. From that oppression which the Land groaneth under. There are some Traders, who sell their goods at excessive Rates, Day-Labourers and Mechanicks are unreasonable in their demands; Yea, there have been those that have dealt deceitfully and oppressively towards the Heathen amongst whom we live, whereby they have been scandalized and prejudiced against the Name of Christ. The Scripture doth frequently threaten Judgments for the sin of oppression, and in special the oppressing Sword cometh as a just punishment for that evil, Ezek. 7. 11. and 22. 15. Prov. 28.8. Isai. 5.7.

2. It is also evident, that men are under the prevailing power of a worldly Spirit, by their strait-handedness, as to publick concerns. God by a continued series of providence, for many years one after another, hath been blasting the fruits of the Earth, in a great measure; and this year more abundantly; Now if we search the

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Scriptures, we shall find, that when the Lord hath been provoked to destroy the fruits of the Earth, either by noxious Creatures, or by his own immediate hand in blittings or droughts, or excessive Rains, (all which judgments we have had experience of) it hath been mostly for this sin of strait-handedness with reference unto publick and pious concerns, Hag. 1. 9. Mal. 3. 8, 9, 11. As when peoples hearts and hands are enlarged upon these Accounts, God hath promised, (and is wont by his faithful providence to do accordingly) to bless with outward plenty and prosperity Prov. 3. 9. 10. Mal. 3. 10 1 Cor. 9. 6, 8, 10. 2 Chron 31. 10. So on the other hand, when men withhold more then is meet, the Lord sends impoverishing judgments upon them, Prov. 11. 24.

XI. There hath been opposition unto the work of Reformation. Although the Lord hath been calling upon us, not only by the voice of his Servants, but by awfull judgments, that we should return unto him, who hath been smiting us; and notwithstanding all the good Laws that are established for the suppression of growing evils, yet men *will not* return every one from his evil way. There hath been great inerrigibleness under lesser judgments; Sin and sinners have many Advocates. They that have been zealous in bearing witness against the sins of the Times, have been reproached, and other wayes discouraged; which argueth an heart unwilling to Reform. Hence the Lords Controversy is not yet done, but his hand is stretched out still, Lev. 26 23, 24. Isai 5. 12, 13.

XII. A publick Spirit is greatly wanting in the most of men. Few that are of Nehemiah's Spirit, Neh. 5. 15. All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christs; Serving themselves upon Christ, and his holy Ordinances. Matters appertaining to the Kingdome of God, are either not at all regarded, or not in the first place. Hence Schools of learning and other publick concerns are in a languishing state. Hence also are unreasonable complaints and murmurings because of publick charges, which is a great sin; and a private self-seeking Spirit, is one of those evils that renders the last Times perilous, 2 Tim. 3. 1.

XIII. There are sins against the Gospel, whereby the Lord hath been provoked. Christ is not prized and embraced in all his Offices and Ordinances as ought to be. Manna hath been loathed, the pleasant Land despised, Psal. 106. 24, Though the Gospel and Co-
venant

venant of grace call upon men to repent, yet there are multitudes that refuse to Repent, when the Lord doth vouchsafe them time and means. No sins provoke the Lord more then Impenitency & unbelief Jer. 8. 6. Zech. 7. 12, 13. Heb. 3. 17, 18. Rev. 2. 21, 22. There is great unfruitfulness under the means of grace, and that brings the most desolating Judgements. Isai. 5. 4, 5. Math. 3. 10. and 21. 43.

Finally; there are several considerations, which seem to evidence, that the Evils mentioned are the matters of the Lords Controversy.

1. In that (though not as to all) as to most of them they are sins which many are guilty of,

2. Sins which have been acknowledged before the Lord on dayes of Humiliation appointed by Authority, and yet not Reformed.

3. Many of them not punished (and some of them not punishable) by men, therefore the Lord himself doth punish for them.



QUEST. II.

WHat is to be done that so these Evils may be Reformed.

Ans. I. It would tend much to promote the Interest of Reformation, if all that are in place above others, do as to themselves and Families, become every way exemplary. Moses being to Reform others began with what concerned himself and his. People are apt to follow the example of those that are above them. 2 Chron. 12. 1. Gal. 2. 14. If then, there be a divided heart, or any other of the Sins of the times, found in any degree among those (or any of them) that are Leaders, either as to Civil or Ecclesiastical Order, Reformation there would have a great and happy influence upon many.

II. Inasmuch as the present standing Generation (both as to Leaders and People) is for the greater part another Generation, then what

what was in New England forty years agoe, for us to declare our adherence unto the Faith and order of the Gospel, according to what is from the Scripture expressed in the Platform of Discipline, may be likewise a good means both to recover those that have erred from the Truth, and to prevent Apostacy for the future.

III. It is requisite that persons be not admitted unto Communion in the Lords Supper without making a personal and publick profession of their Faith and Repentance, either orally, or in some other way, so as shall be to the just satisfaction of the Church; and that therefore both Elders and Churches be duely watchfull and circumspect in this matter. 1Cor. 11.28,29. Act. 2.41,42. Ezek. 44.7. 8,9.

IIII. In order to Reformation, it is necessary that the Discipline of Christ in the power of it should be upheld in the Churches. It is evident from Christs Epistles to the Churches in the lesser Asia, that the evils and degeneracy then prevailing amongst Christians, proceeded chiefly from the neglect of Discipline. It is a known and true observation, that remissness in the exercise of Discipline, was attended with corruption of manners, and that did provoke the Lord to give men up to strong delusions in matters of Faith. Discipline is Christs Ordinance, both for the prevention of Apostacy in Churches and to recover them when collapsed. And these New English Churches, are under peculiar engagements to be faithfull unto Christ, and unto his Truth in this matter, by virtue of the Church Covenant, as also in that the management of Discipline according to the Scriptures, was the special design of our Fathers in coming into this wilderness. The degeneracy of the Rising Generation (so much complained of) is in a great measure to be attributed unto neglects of this nature. It all Church duty in these respects, were faithfully and diligently attended, not only towards Parents, but also towards the Children of the Church, according to the Rules of Christ, we may hope that the sunk and dying interest of Religion, will be revived, and a world of sin prevented for the future; and that Disputes respecting the Subject of Baptism, would be comfortably issued.

V. It is requisite that utmost endeavours should be used, in order to a full supply of Officers in the Churches, according to Christs Institution. The defect of these Churches on this account is very lamentable, there being in most of the Churches only one Teaching Officer, for the burden of the whole Congregation to lye upon. The Lord Christ would not have instituted Pastors, Teachers, Ruling Elders (nor the Apostles have ordained Elders in every Church) Act.

14.23. Tit. 1.3.) if he had not seen there was need of them for the good of his People; and therefore for men to think they can do well enough without them, is both to break the second Commandment, and to reflect upon the wisdom of Christ, as if he did appoint unnecessary Officers in his Church. Experience hath evinced, that personal instruction and Discipline, hath been an happy means to Reformat degenerated Congregations; yea, and owned by the Lord for the conversion of many Souls: but where there are great Congregations, it is impossible for one man, besides his labours in publick, fully to attend these other things of great importance; and necessary to be done in order to an effectual Reformation of Families and Congregations.

VI. It is incumbent on the Magistrate, to take care that these Officers have due encouragement, and maintenance afforded to them. It is high injustice and oppression, yea, a Sin that cries in the Lords ears for judgement, when wages is withheld from faithfull and diligent Labourers. Jam. 5. 4. And if it be so as to those that labour about carnal things, much more as to those that labour day & night about the spiritual and eternal welfare of Souls, 1 Cor. 9. 11, 13, 14. And the Scripture is express that not only Members of Churches, but all that are taught in the word, are bound to communicate to him that Teacheth, and that in all good things. Gal. 6. 6. Luk. 10. 7. 1 Tim 5. 17, 18. If therefore People be unwilling to doe what justice and reason calls for, the Magistrate is to see them doe their duty in this matter. Wherefore, Magistrates, and that in Scriptures referring to the dayes of the New Testament, are said to be the Churches nursing Fathers. Isa. 49. 23. For that it concerns them to take care that the Churches be fed with the bread and water of Life. The Magistrate is to be a keeper of both Tables, which as a Magistrate he cannot be, if he doe not promote the interest of Religion, by all those means which are of the Lords appointment. And we find in Scripture, that when the Lords Ministers have been forced to neglect the House of God, and goe every one into the field (as too much of that hath been amongst us) because the People did not allow them that maintenance which was necessary, the Magistrate did look upon himself as concerned to effect a Reformation. Neh. 13. 10.

VII. Due care and faithfulness with respect unto the establishment and execution of wholesome Laws, would very much promote the interest of Reformation. If there be no Laws established in the Common-wealth, but what there is Scripture warrant for, and those

Laws so worded, as that they may not become a snare unto any that are bound to animadvert upon the Violators of them, and that then they be impartially executed; Profaneness, Heresy, Schism, Disorders in Families, Towns, Churches would be happily prevented and Reformed. In special it is necessary, that those Laws for Reformation of provoking evils, enacted and emitted by the General Court in the day of our Calamity, should be duely considered, lest we become guilty of dissembling and dallying with the Almighty, and thereby Sin and Wrath be augmented upon us: in particular, those Laws which respect the Regulation of Houses for publick entertainment, that the number of such Houses doe not exceed what is necessary nor any so entrusted, but persons of known approved piety and Fidelity, and that Inhabitants be prohibited drinking in such Houses, and those that shall without License from Authority sell any sort of strong drink, be exemplarily punished. And if withal, inferiour Officers, Constables and Tithing men, be chosen constantly of the ablest and most prudent in the place, Authorized and Sworn to a faithful discharge of their respective Trusts, and duely encouraged in their just informations against any that shall transgress the Laws so established, we may hope that much of that prophaneness which doth threaten the ruine of the uprising Generation will be prevented.

VIII. Solemn and explicit Renewal of Covenant is a Scripture Expedient for Reformation. We seldom read of any solemn Reformation but it was accomplished in this way, as the Scripture doth abundantly declare and testify. And as the Judgements which befall the Lords people of old are recorded for our Admonition, 1 Cor. 10. 11. So the Course which they did (according to God) observe in order to Reformation and averting those Judgements, is recorded for our imitation, And this was an Explicit Renovation of Covenant. And that the Lord doth call us to this work, these considerations seem to evince. 1. If Implicit Renewal of Covenant be an expedient for Reformation, and to divert impending wrath and Judgement, then much more an Explicit Renewal is so. But the first of these is Inhabitable. In prayer, and more especially on dayes of solemn Humiliation before the Lord, there is an Implicit Renewal of Covenant, and yet the very dictates of natural Conscience put men upon such duties, when they are apprehensive of a day of wrath, approaching: If we may not Renew our Covenants with God, for fear lest men should not be true and faithful in doing what they promise, then we must not observe dayes of Fasting and Prayer, which none will say.

2. When

2. When the Church was overrun with Idolatry and Superstition, those whom the Lord raised up as Reformers, put them upon solemn Renewal of Covenant. So Asa, Jehoadah, Hezekiah, Josiah. By a parity of Reason, when Churches are overgrown with worldliness (which is spiritual Idolatry) and other corruptions, the same course may and should be observed in order to Reformation. Nay, 3. We find in Scripture, that when corruption in manners (though not in Worship) hath prevailed in the Church, Renovation of Covenant hath been the expedient, whereby Reformation hath been attempted, and in some measure attained. The Jews have dreaded the sin of Idolatry ever since the Babylonian Captivity, Joh. 8. 41. But in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time, too much sensuality and Sabbath breaking, Oppression, Strait-handedness respecting the publick Worship of God (the very same sins that are found with us) were common, prevailing iniquities. Therefore did those Reformers put them upon Renewing their Covenant, and solemnly to promise God, that they would endeavour not to offend by those Evils as formerly, Ezra. 10. 3. Neh. 5. 12, 13. and 10. *per totum*. and 13. 15. 4. The things which are mentioned in the Scripture as grounds of Renewing Covenant are applicable unto us. *e. g.* The averting of divine wrath is expressed as a sufficient Reason for attendance unto this duty. 2 Chron. 29. 10. Ezra. 10. 14. Again, being circumstanced with difficultyes and distresses is mentioned as the ground of Explicit Renovation of Covenant. Neh. 9. 38. Hence the Lords Servants, when so circumstanced, have been wont to make solemn vows (and that is an expresse Covenanting) Gen. 28. 20, 21. Judg. 11. 30. Numb 21. 1, 2. Now that Clouds of wrath are hanging over these Churches, every one seeth, And that we are circumstanced with some distressing difficultyes is sufficiently known. This consideration alone, might be enough to put us upon more solemn engagements unto the Lord our God. 5. Men are hereby brought under a stronger obligation, unto better obedience. There is an Awe of God upon the Consciences of men when so obliged. As it is in respect of Oaths, they that have any Conscience in them, when under such Bonds, are afraid to violate them. Some that are but Legalists and Hypocrites, yet solemn Covenants with God, have such an Awe upon Conscience, as to enforce them unto an outward Reformation, and that doth divert temporal Judgements. And they that are sincere, will thereby be engaged unto a more close and holy walking before the Lord, and so become more eminently blessings unto the Societies, and places whereto they

do belong. 6. This is the way to prevent, (and therefore also to recover out of) Apostasy. In this respect, although there were no visible degeneracy amongst us, yet this Renovation of Covenant, might be of singular advantage. There was no publick Idolatry (nor other Transgression) allowed of in the dayes of Joshua. Judg. 2. 7. Josh. 23. 8. yet did Joshua perswade the children of Israel, to renew their Covenant; doubtless, that so he might thereby restrain them from future Idolatry and Apostasy. Josh. 24. 25. Lastly, The Churches which have lately and solemnly attended this Scripture expedient, for Reformation, have experienced the presence of God with them, signally owning them therein; How much more might a blessing be expected, should there be a general concurrence in this matter?

IX. In Renewing Covenant, it is needful that the sins of the Times should be engaged against, and Reformation thereof (in the name and by the help of Christ) promised before the Lord, Ezra 10. 3. Neh. 5. 12, 13. and Chap. 10.

X. It seems to be most conducive unto Edification and Reformation, that in Renewing Covenant, such things as are clear and indisputable be expressed, that so all the Churches may agree in Covenanting to promote the latest interest of holiness, and close walking with God.

XI. As an expedient for Reformation, it is good that effectual care should be taken, respecting Schools of Learning. The interest of Religion and good Literature have been wont to rise and fall together. We read in the Scripture of Masters and Scholars, and of Schools and Colledges. 1 Chron. 25. 8. Mal. 2. 12. Act. 19. 9. and 22. 3. And the most eminent Reformers amongst the Lords People of old, thought it their concern to erect and uphold them. Was not Samuel (that great Reformer) President of the Colledge at Najoth, 1 Sam. 19. 18, 19. and is thought to be one of the first Founders of Colledges. Did not Elijah and Elisha, restore the Schools erected in the Land of Israel? And Josiah (another great Reformer) shewed respect to the Colledge at Jerusalem. 2 King. 22. 14. Ecclesiastical Story informs, that great care was taken by the Apostles, and their immediate Successors, for the setting of Schools in all places, where the Gospel had been preached, that so the interest of Religion might be preserved, and the Truth propagated to succeeding Generations. It is mentioned as one of the greatest mercyes that ever God, bestowed upon his People Israel, that he raised up of their Sons for Prophets, Amos 2. 11. which hath respect to their education in School

of Learning. And we have all cause to bless God that put it in to the hearts of our Fathers to take care concerning this matter. For these Churches had been in a state most deplorable, if the Lord had not blessed the Colledge, so as from thence to supply most of the Churches, as at this day. When New-England was poor, and we were but few in number Comparatively, there was a Spirit to encourage Learning, and the Colledge was full of Students, whom God hath made blessings, not only in this, but in other Lands; but it is deeply to be lamented, that now, when we are become many, and more able then at our beginnings, that Society and other inferior Schools are in such a low and languishing State. Wherefore as we desire that Reformation and Religion should flourish, it concerns us to endeavour, that both the Colledge, and all other Schools of Learning in every place, be duely inspected and encouraged.

XII. Inasmuch as a thorough and heart Reformation is necessary, in order to obtaining peace with God, Jer. 3. 10. and all outward means will be ineffectual unto that end, except the Lord pour down his Spirit from on High, it doth therefore concern us to cry mightily unto God, both in ordinary and extraordinary manner, that he would be pleased to rain down Righteousness upon us, Isai. 32. 15. Hos. 10. 12. Ezek. 39. 29. Luk. 11. 13. Amen!

F I N I S.